

# Rotavirus Surveillance News

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A quarterly newsletter edited by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA, USA

## Upcoming Meetings

CAPGAN, Feb 2006, Dhaka

Asian Conference on  
Diarrhoeal Diseases and  
Nutrition (ASCODD), March  
2006, Bangkok

## In Upcoming Issues...

- Update – Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office of WHO (EMRO) network
- Update – Reference lab

## Links to Partners

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) – U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[www.who.int/en/](http://www.who.int/en/) - World Health Organization

[www.rotavirusvaccine.org](http://www.rotavirusvaccine.org)  
– PATH's rotavirus vaccine program

[www.ivi.org](http://www.ivi.org) – International Vaccine Institute

[www.cdcfoundation.org](http://www.cdcfoundation.org) – CDC Foundation



## Welcome

Welcome to the second edition of Rotavirus Surveillance News. The newsletter is a product of PATH's rotavirus vaccine program, a collaboration between World Health Organization (WHO), PATH, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that is funded by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations. The Disease Burden and Surveillance Program (DBS), based at CDC and in collaboration with PATH, was established to support surveillance

activities and studies that would help define the disease and economic burden of rotavirus disease in countries and regions around the world. We intend for this quarterly newsletter to provide you with timely, helpful updates on the latest news related to rotavirus surveillance activities worldwide. Each issue will focus on one region or a type of activity, as well as provide updates on recent meetings, publications, and other news of interest. In this edition, we introduce you

to the Pan American Health Organization Surveillance Network, which has been active since 2000 and has recently expanded to exciting new areas and new activities.

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## Update – PAHO Surveillance Network

Plans for a surveillance network for rotavirus in the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) region began with an informal meeting in Brasilia, Brazil in 2000. Rotavirus researchers of the region shared their findings and a review underscored the dearth of existing data on rotavirus, particularly in the poorer countries of the region [1]. This invigorated national agencies to mount surveillance projects and, between 2000 and 2003, CDC technical advisors collaborated with PAHO and ministries of health in

several countries (El Salvador, Venezuela, Paraguay, Trinidad, Guyana, Saint Vincent, and Suriname) to develop surveillance protocols. With funding from PATH, these countries launched surveillance activities with an international meeting in Peru in September, 2003 [2].

In July 2004, the Sixth International Rotavirus Symposium was held in Mexico City [3]. The Symposium featured advances in the testing of new rotavirus vaccines, including a candidate vaccine that was being

evaluated in more than 60,000 children in 11 countries of the Region. Appreciating the need for surveillance data, Bolivia and Honduras expressed interest in joining the PAHO network. Furthermore, Honduran authorities proposed to undertake a demonstration project to document reductions in diarrhea hospitalizations following vaccine introduction and signed a formal agreement with PATH, PAHO and CDC in October 2004.

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## Pan American Health Organization Network

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## Network update (cont.)

With improved surveillance in the Region, in early 2005, periodic outbreaks of rotavirus with increases in consultations, hospitalizations and deaths were detected and reported from a number of Central American countries – El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala [4]. Each attracted the attention of media and health authorities, leading to an urgent call for effective interventions.

In December 2005, representatives from 18 countries either conducting or interested in establishing rotavirus surveillance attended a PAHO-sponsored workshop in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This growing network of PAHO countries will not only help to resolve gaps in rotavirus data in the region, but will

serve as an example of strong leadership from PAHO to coordinate regional activities. With the licensure of a rotavirus vaccine in 12 countries and its imminent inclusion into national immunization programs in Brazil and Panama, these timely surveillance data will allow evidence-based decision-making regarding vaccine introduction and monitoring.

## References

- 1) Kane, E.M., et al., The epidemiology of rotavirus diarrhea in Latin America. Anticipating rotavirus vaccines. Pan American Journal of Public Health, 2004. 16(6): p. 371-7.
- 2) Pan American Health Organization, Regional meeting for the Americas assesses progress against rotavirus. Pan American Journal of Public Health, 2004. 15(1): p. 66-70.
- 3) Diarrheal illness in Central America: January to March 2005, in PAHO Immunization Newsletter. 2005. 27(4): p. 1, 6.

## What's New

**Results of Phase III trials of rotavirus vaccines reported in NEJM.** On January 5, 2006, the New England Journal of Medicine published the results of two large clinical trials showing

that rotavirus vaccines manufactured by Merck and GlaxoSmithKline were highly efficacious and safe in trials conducted in Europe and in North and South America.

## Questions or comments?

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